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HISTORY

OF

THE ABIPONES.

PART II.

CHAPTER I.

OF THE TERRITORY, ORIGIN, AND VARIOUS NAMES OF THE ABIPONES.

The Abipones inhabit the province Chaco, the centre of all Paraguay; they have no fixed abodes, nor any boundaries, except what fear of their neighbours has established. They roam extensively in every direction, whenever the opportunity of attacking their enemies, or the necessity of avoiding them renders a journey advisable. The northern shore of the Rio Grande or Bermejo, which the Indians call Iñatè, was their native land in the last century. Thence they removed, to avoid the war carried on against Chaco by the Spaniards of Salta, at the commencement of this century, and migrating towards the south, took possession of a

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valley formerly held by the Calchaquis. This territory, which is about two hundred leagues in extent, they at present occupy. But from what region their ancestors came there is no room for conjecture. Ychamenraikia, chief cacique of the Abipones in the town of St. Jeronymo, told us, that, after crossing the vast waters, they were carried hither on an ass, and this he declared he had heard from ancient men. I have often thought that the Americans originally came, step by step, from the most northern parts of Europe, which are perhaps joined to America, or separated only by a narrow frith. We have observed some resemblance in the manners and customs of the Abipones to the Laplanders, and people of Nova Zembla, and we always noticed in these savages a magnetical propensity to the north, as if they inclined towards their native soil; for when irritated by any untoward event, they cried in a threatening tone—*Mahaik quer ereëgem*, I will go to the north; though this threat meant that they would return to the northern parts of Paraguay, where their savage compatriots live at this day, free from the yoke of the Spaniards, and from Christian discipline.

But if the Americans sprung from the north of Europe, why are all the Indians of both Americas destitute of beard, in which the northern Eu-

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roads, or their want of acquaintance with them. It sometimes happens that a lake or marsh, which the Abipones swim with ease, obliges the Spanish cavalry to abandon the pursuit.

The whole territory of the Abipones scarcely contains a place which has not received a name from some memorable event or peculiarity of that neighbourhood. It may be proper to mention some of the most famous of these places; viz. *Netagrʼaudc Lpdtage*, the bird's nest; for in this place birds resembling storks yearly build their nests. *Liquinrʼánala*, the cross, which was formerly fixed here by the Spaniards. *Nihtrenac Lcënererʼquiè*, the cave of the tiger. *Paët Latetà*, the bruised teats. *Atopehèntʼa Lauaté*, the haunt of capibaris. *Lareca Caëpa*, the high trees. *Lalegrʼaicavalca*, the little white things. Hail of enormous size once fell in this place, and killed vast numbers of cattle. Many other places are named from the rivers that flow past them. The most considerable are the Evòrayè, the Parana, or Paraguay, the Iñatè, the Rio Grande, or Vermejo, the Ychimaye, or Rio Rey, the Neboquelatèl, or mother of palms, called by the Spaniards Malabrigo, the Narahage, or Inespin, the Lachaoquè Nâuè, Ycalc, Ycham, &c. the Rio Negro, Verde, Salado, &c.

In the sixtieth year of the present century, many families of Abipones removed, some to the

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banks of the Rio Grande, others to the more distant northern parts. The last Abiponian colony was nearly ten leagues north of the Rio Grande, in which situation we found that the Toba savages, who call themselves Natagaebit, had formerly resided.

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whether all the Spaniards went to Heaven when they died, and was told by my companion that those who had closed their lives with a pious death alone obtained this happiness. "I agree entirely with you," said the Abipon; "for the Spaniard Raphael, who was killed here lately, seems not to have gained admittance yet; our countrymen say that they see him riding in the plain every night, and hissing in a mournful tone." This, though to be accounted either a mere fabrication, or the effect of fancy, justifies the conclusion, that the savages believe the soul to survive the body, though they are entirely ignorant of what becomes of it, or what may be its fate. The other people of Paraguay too hold the same opinion of the immortality of the soul.

From what I have said of the jugglers, who does not see that all their knowledge, all their arts, consist of nothing but cunning, fraud, and deceit? Yet the savages yield them the readiest faith and obedience during their lifetime, and after their death revere them as divine men. In their migrations, they reverently carry with them their bones and other reliques as sacred pledges. Whenever the Abipones see a fiery meteor, or hear it thunder three or four times, these simpletons believe that one of their jugglers is dead, and that this thunder and lightning are his funeral obsequies.